



center for writing

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WELCOME TO THE CENTER FOR WRITING'S FIRST-EVER ALUMNI NEWSLETTER, which we hope will inspire you to visit our new alumni pages on the Center for Writing's website (writing.umn.edu/alums). We have long appreciated how much our past colleagues have contributed to our mission, so, in this era of social networking, we want to learn more about what you are doing now and how your work with us has influenced—or continued in—your lives beyond the Center. We invited six alums (some of whom we hope you remember) to respond to our new "11 Questions for Alumni" survey and were delighted to hear about the exciting things they have been doing. Below, we've shared highlights from their stories, and you can read their complete responses on the new alumni web page. On that page, you'll have an opportunity to share with us your responses to the survey, helping us to create a virtual community of Center for Writing friends and alums.



SANG TRUONG consulted in the General College Writing Center (GCWC) for five years in the late 1990s while working on her bachelor's degree after immigrating to the US from Vietnam. She went on to obtain a master's degree in education. Sang's writing center work enhanced her English language and communication skills, and she has used these abilities since then through her work in Ramsey County as an ESL teacher, counselor, legal assistant, interpreter, and translator for immigrants from Vietnam and other Asian countries. She prepares court statements, facilitates cooperation between the Asian immigrant communities and US officials, translates documents, and interprets for several organizations.

STEPHANIE NERO, like Sang, has used her talents mainly outside of academia, in her case, in marketing and social media work, currently with Lifetime Fitness. She writes that she found her Student Writing Support writing consultant and attendant positions rewarding because they allowed her to share

with others what she had to offer and helped her develop the ability to take—and give—constructive criticism. These positions influenced the work she has sought since then: "Experiencing a challenging and rewarding work environment early in my professional development has made me seek out those traits in other workplaces."

When you're young and in an entry-level position, it's important to have confidence in what you bring to the table, but also know that your approach isn't the only (or right) one. Just being able to have constructive, respectful, collaborative dialogue and to be comfortable doing that has probably been the most valuable professional skill I've acquired through my time at the writing center.

STEPHANIE NERO,
WRITING CONSULTANT, 2004-07

SARAH HEUSER (formerly White) has taken the understanding of the power of writing she gained during her Student Writing Center and Center for Writing years to the field of clinical social work in mental health at the Veterans Administration. Besides providing a social network and welcoming place to start raising her daughter in graduate school, the Center

led Sarah to an appreciation of the value of helping "people write/express themselves to say what they want to say, not what we want them to say." As a result, she uses journaling and narrative writing interventions for mental health recovery with the people she serves.

In her work for the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies of Writing and the Center for Writing, SARA LINDEY (formerly Berrey) discovered that teaching brought her more rewards than did researching and writing essays, leading her to pursue teaching at St. Vincent College in Latrobe, PA, a liberal arts college where she is an Assistant Professor of English. She writes that at the Center she “gained a greater understanding about how writing instruction and diverse writing activities can enable discovery and analysis, foster curiosity and insight, and solidify complex concepts.” In addition, her efforts developing the Center’s Teaching with Writing web pages prepared her to lead an online curriculum resource project for the Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children’s Media (www.fredrogerscenter.org/resources/toolkit).

ALEX MUELLER has taken the insights he gained from his Minnesota Writing Project (MWP) experiences into his work as an Assistant Professor of English at the University of Massachusetts - Boston. MWP’s “real time social network for writing teachers” with

its philosophy of “teachers teaching teachers” significantly influenced his choice to work with secondary and college English instructors. Alex also credits his MWP experiences of facilitating workshops, planning events, conducting research, and writing grants with developing his respect for the value of collaboration.

I believe in the power of writing to learn, teach, inspire, and change minds, attitudes, and behaviors.

In my teaching and in faculty workshops at my current institution, I rehearse the values I came to adopt working at the Center for Writing.

SARA LINDEY,
ADMINISTRATIVE FELLOW, 2001–04, AND
TEACHING ASSISTANT, 2007–08

I often tell people that I wouldn’t have a job without the Minnesota Writing Project and the Center for Writing.

ALEX MUELLER,
TEACHING ASSISTANT, 2003–07

GCWC alumni will remember RENATA FITZPATRICK (formerly Thomson), who worked as an undergraduate, graduate, and then professional writing consultant over a period of eleven years, starting in the mid ’90s. She has just started a new job at a Carleton College in Northfield where she tutors, assists in tutor professional development, and offers consultations to faculty about teaching writing to students whose first language is not English. Renata’s

involvement with the GCWC and the Commanding English program led her to pursue the work with non-native English writers she began as an undergraduate. And, she writes, “I miss the old GC writing center, and have great memories of the work and the people I worked with there.”



As we reflect on the past and look forward to the future, we know the Center for Writing’s greatest strength is the people who have worked here. We thank those of you who have given to our new Foundation account (writing.umn.edu/home/giving.html) and ask that you consider us in your year-end giving this year. Such gifts strengthen our support for student writers and excellent writing instruction and send a strong message about the importance of writing at the University and throughout the state of Minnesota.

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